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The confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame *in Amiens as a 'Hybrid Forum'*

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Abstract

The textual witnesses of religious poetry produced by the late medieval confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens, in northern France, give an example of a type of religious text which allows us to reconstruct the interplay between the religious field and the social field of commerce and artisanal production. After discussing the practices of producing and staging religious poetry in confraternities in late medieval and early modern France as "hybrid forums", the article discusses several examples of texts from unpublished manuscripts. It argues that the vivid imagery of the poems dedicated to the Virgin Mary allowed a mutual exchange of resources. While the members of the ordained religious gathered support and a popularized religious language, the participating laypeople could imbue their everyday work with a form of sacrality.

Keywords

confraternities – religious poetry – devotional culture – France – rhetoric – sacralization – religious field

Several textual and iconographic witnesses survive of the religious poetry that was produced by the late medieval confraternity of the *Puy Notre-Dame* in Amiens, a town situated in northern France.[1] This confraternity's most impor-

1 Manuscripts: Amiens, Société des antiquaires de Picardie, MS 23 (*l'escritel*); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS fr. 145; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3164 and MS 4652–4653. Seven paintings predating 1520 survive of those that were made for the confraternity, see: Cécile Scailliérez, ed., *François Ier et l'art des Pays-Bas* (Paris, 2017), 54–59; Maurice Duvanel, Pierre Leroy, Matthieu Pinette, *La confrérie Notre-Dame du Puy d'Amiens* (Amiens,

tant activity was a yearly poetry competition in which its members competed for the best poem celebrating the Virgin. They did so in the highly demanding poetical form known as the *chant royal*, which entailed, for instance, that the same rhymes be repeated in each of the five stanzas (*coblas unisonans*) and each stanza end with the same prescribed metaphorical and cryptic verse. The full-page opening miniature in the confraternity's *escritel*, a manuscript memory book with the regulations of the confraternity started in 1452, shows its members united under the cloak of the Virgin.[2] The *escritel* also reports the names and occupations of the annually elected *maîtres* with their personal mottos, which would simultaneously serve as the prescribed verse for the annual poetry contest. These annals show that the social composition of the confraternity was highly diverse: the members originated from both the clergy and the laity, the latter ranging from the socially higher classes to artisans who must have been only of moderate wealth. Despite their diverse backgrounds, on the miniature in the *escritel*, laymen and tonsured religious alike are all united together under the Virgin's protective cloak.

The Amiens confraternity can very well be understood according to Bourdieu's terminology as an alliance between ordained religious and the laity, which exerted a certain effect on the religious field. However, a more complex dynamics was at play in this confraternity and in many similar organisations in late medieval northern France and the Low Countries: the specific metaphorical imagery used in some of their poetical creations reflects a profound mixing of the religious field with the social field of commerce and artisanal production work, the latter usually associated with the laity. As a consequence, the religious field enlarged its potential of semantic expressions to include objects and concepts related to production and commercial activities. As a second consequence, the social field of the active laity could become imbued with religious meaning and even sacrality.

1997), 20; Anne-Marie Lecoq, "Le puy d'Amiens de 1518, la loi du genre et l'art du peintre," *La Revue de l'Art* 38 (1977), 63–74. Modern editions and studies: Auguste Breuil, "La confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy d'Amiens," *Mémoires de la société des Antiquaires de Picardie* 13 (1854), 485–662; "Règlement et poésies de la confrérie de Notre-Dame-du-Puy, d'Amiens," in *Recueil de documents inédits concernant la Picardie publiés d'après les titres originaux conservés dans son cabinet*, ed. Victor de Beauvillé (Paris, 1860), 139–145; Georges Durand, *Tableaux et chants royaux de la confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame d'Amiens reproduits en 1517 pour Louise de Savoie, duchesse d'Angoulême* (Amiens, 1911); Gérard Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy. Étude sur les Puys marials de la France du Nord du XIVe siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1992), 50–99; François-Xavier Maillart, "La confrérie du Puy Notre-Dame d'Amiens et sa production artistique et littéraire de 1389 à 1525," *Publications du C.A.H.M.E.R.* 24 (2011).

2 Amiens, Société des antiquaires de Picardie, MS 23, fol. 6v.

This process of conceptual and religious cross-fertilisation and even the intermingling of two fields does not fit naturally into Bourdieu's ideas of the social field (*le champ*), even if he sees its boundaries as being constantly negotiated and therefore variable. At times Bourdieu seems to conceptualise the field rather as a distinct and homogenous entity with relative autonomy, by representing it as a microcosm and a specific space of social relations between agents, with a clearly distinguishable interior and exterior.[3] Therefore, in this article I intend to finetune Bourdieu's theories of the social field by using Michel Callon's concept of "hybrid forums" in order to approach the confraternity of the Puy Notre Dame and its use of metaphorical images.

The sociologist Michel Callon has recently proposed the concept of hybrid forums as a remedy for the distrust between different societal groups in present-day societies. Hybrid forums are intended to re-connect opposing stakeholders in a "dialogical space":

> forums because they are open spaces where groups can come together to discuss technical options involving the collective, hybrid because the groups involved and the spokespersons claiming to represent them are heterogeneous, including experts, politicians, technicians, and laypersons who consider themselves involved.[4]

The most important results of the dialogues in hybrid forums are the exchange of knowledge and the discovery of shared concerns, leading to a transformation of all groups involved:

> Learning that results in alternate exchanges between the forms of knowledge of specialists and the knowledge of laypersons; learning that, beyond institutionalized representations, leads to the discovery of mutual, developing, and malleable identities that are led to take each other into account and thereby transform themselves.[5]

A similar process of cross-fertilisation, paired with a process of mutual transformation is operating in the Amiens confraternity and other *Puys* in late medieval Europe. Objects or activities from the daily occupations of the social field of

3 Pierre Bourdieu, "Le Marché des biens symboliques," *l'Année sociologique* 22 (1971), 49–126, there 55–67.

4 Michel Callon, Pierre Lascoumes, Yannick Barthe, *Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy* (Cambridge, 2009), 35, 18.

5 Ibid., 35.

working life were operationalised as metaphorical images for the Virgin, resulting in an ingenious interplay with advanced theological concepts, thus transforming both the religious field and the secular field of industrial production and trade.

In this article I intend to study the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens while using Michel Callon's concept of the hybrid forum. Clergy and laity came into direct contact with each other in the confraternity, giving the individual members the occasion to bond through social ties of friendship and fraternity. A particularity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens is its poetical production, allowing members from different backgrounds to interconnect, to exchange ideas and experiences in order to create a common poetic language by exploring socially inclusive metaphors, leading to an identitarian transformation and a partial overlapping of the religious field and the field of artisanal production and commerce. In order to demonstrate this, I will first give an overview of the emergence and spread of literary confraternities producing religious poetry celebrating the Virgin, in northern France and the southern Low Countries. The Puy in Amiens is a local initiative, yet it is related to other, similar Puys in northern France, to chambers of rhetoric in the southern Low Countries and possibly even to similar confraternities in more distant areas. As a consequence, some of the social characteristics of the Amiens Puy will be retraceable elsewhere in late medieval Europe. Second, I will zoom in on the social composition of the membership of the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens in order to show that it was a social network that recruited members from different social backgrounds and religious statuses. The specific fraternal bonds created by the confraternity and its sociability resulted in a change of the boundaries of the religious field to include the lay world as well. Finally, I will turn to specific verbal and visual images chosen for the annual poetry contests, arguing that one of its central strategies was to find a common metaphorical language celebrating the Virgin and expressing the presence of Divine grace in both religious and secular social spaces.

1 Confraternities Producing Religious Poetry

Medieval confraternities seem to have emerged starting in the early eleventh century, possibly even earlier, stimulated by the evangelical call for fraternity, charity, and love of one's neighbour. The first *elemosinae*[6] were initially almost

6 On the terminology, see: Noël Coulet, "Le mouvement confraternel en Provence et dans le

exclusively made up of clerics, but from the twelfth century onwards there is evidence for voluntary associations uniting clerics and laypeople.[7] Traces of voluntary associations can be found throughout medieval Europe; however, the organisation structure, membership, activities, and goals of the groups could vary according to local circumstances.

Some confraternities seem to have been primarily intended as a form of collective income insurance or funeral insurance, as some historians would characterise them.[8] The founding charters of many of this type of *confréries*, *charités* or *tables des pauvres* show that they attracted membership from the higher and lower clergy, sometimes from the nobility, and laypeople of widely differing circumstances, both male and female. All members were asked to pay an annual fee that was often income-dependent, to pray for deceased members, and to attend the annual banquet. Should one of the members become destitute or die, the collective budget of the confraternity would provide financial assistance. Based on the founding charters alone, these might seem to be all the activities of the confraternities, but contextual evidence suggests that many of these social networks must have had broader social and catechetical goals.[9]

The confraternity model was also used for medieval voluntary associations that produced religious poetry in the French vernaculars and organised competitions for the best poem. The earliest example was probably established in the town of Arras/Atrecht in the twelfth century. This town is now situated in northern France, but in the Middle Ages and early modern period it regularly

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Comtat Venaissin au Moyen Âge," *Publications de l'École Française de Rome* 97 (1987), 83–110, there p. 92.

7 Konrad Eisenbichler, ed., *A Companion to Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities* (Leiden, 2019); Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, Stefania Pastore, eds., *Faith's Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities* (Turnhout, 2012); Catherine Vincent, *Les Confréries médiévales dans le royaume de France: XIIIe–XVe siècle* (Paris, 1994); Catherine Vincent, *Des charités bien ordonnées: les confréries normandes de la fin du XIIIe siècle au début du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1988); Jacques Chiffoleau, "Les confréries, la mort et la religion en Comtat Venaissin à la fin du Moyen Âge," *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen Âge-Temps Modernes* 91 (1979), 785–825. For further bibliography, see: Christopher Black, "The Development of Confraternity Studies over the Past Thirty Years," in *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra (Cambridge, 2000), 9–29.

8 See for instance: Marcel Fosseyeux, "Les premiers budgets municipaux d'assistance. La taxe des pauvres au XVIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France* 88 (1934), 407–432.

9 Miri Rubin, "Fraternities and lay piety in the later Middle Ages," in *Einungen und Bruderschaften in der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt*, ed. Peter Johanek (Cologne, 1993), 185–198; Sabrina Corbellini, "The Plea for Lay Bibles in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Tuscany: The Role of Confraternities," in *Faith's Boundaries. Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi, Stefania Pastore (Turnhout, 2012), 87–112.

changed hands between the kings of France, the counts of Flanders, the counts of Burgundy, the kings of England, and the Habsburg Emperors.

Other historians have previously described in detail the genesis in Arras of the *Carité de Notre-Dame des Ardents*, later the *Confrerie des jogleors et des bourgeois*, and the production of literary works by its members.[10] According to its foundation legend, in the early twelfth century the Virgin appeared to two *jongleurs* (acrobats, musicians, actors, storytellers) and gave them a candle, the wax of which, mixed with water, healed people suffering from the burning pains of ergotism (*les ardents* means "the burning people"), caused by a fungal contamination of rye. The oldest surviving written sources attesting the existence and the membership of the *Carité de Notre-Dame des Ardents* date from the late twelfth century: This is the *nécrologie*, or records of deceased members, starting in 1194.[11] These lists show that the membership of the confraternity consisted not only of *jongleurs*, but that it also included a great variety of social groups from the town of Arras, for instance Benedictine monks from Saint-Vaast Abbey, canons, and urban élites, as well as laypeople from much humbler backgrounds, both male and female.[12] This composite membership is also confirmed by a later copy of the original founding charter: "*associatis sibi venerabilis viris et mulieribus civitatis et aliis nobilibus, cleris scilicet et militibus*" (associating venerable men and women from the town and other noble persons, such as clerics and knights).[13]

In addition to the construction and management of the chapel with the candle relic on the *Petit Marché* and a hospital, the organisation of annual festivities, the financing of masses, and the commemoration of its deceased members, the confraternity was also active in an impressive array of literary activities.[14] Although the largest part of the surviving textual production by the confraternity's members from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is mostly

10 Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca, 2007), 80–126; Carol Symes, "The Confraternity of Jongleurs and the Cult of the Virgin," in *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France*, ed. Dorothea Kullmann (Toronto, 2009), 176–197; Roger Berger, *Littérature et société arrageoises au XIIIe siècle. Les chansons et dits artésiens* (Arras, 1981), 86–88, 110–116; Michèle Gally, *Parler d'amour au puy d'Arras* (Orléans, 2004), 33–40.

11 Roger Berger, *La nécrologie de la Confrérie des jongleurs et des bourgeois d'Arras*, 2 vols. (Arras, 1963–1970). For the thirteenth-century documents relating the mythical foundation of the confraternity, see: Berger, "Le récit du miracle," *La nécrologie*, 2: 137–156; Symes, "The Confraternity of Jongleurs" (see above n. 10), 181.

12 Berger, *La nécrologie* (see above n. 11).

13 Ibid., 2: 154.

14 Jennifer Saltzstein, "Cleric-trouvères and the Jeux-Partis of Medieval Arras," *Viator* 43/2 (2012), 147–163.

of a courtly, satirical, and moralistic nature, there is slightly later evidence for contests of religious poetry in Picard French that can be connected to Arras. This is most notably a manuscript with religious poetry following a prescribed form (*serventois*) from Arras that can be dated around 1300.[15] There is, however, uncertainty about the relation between regularly organised poetry contests in the same town, sometimes referred to as *le Puy* (from the Latin *podium*, a stage or elevated area[16]), the surviving religious *chansons couronnés*, and the Arras confraternity.[17] Given the Marian origin of the confraternity, it seems logical to infer that it was also involved in stimulating religious poetry and the organisation of the Puy contest.[18] Moreover, the influence of the Bible book Song of Songs and, to an even greater extent, the increasing use of love vocabulary and imagery for devotional exercises from the thirteenth century onwards, render it plausible that the poetic vocabulary of courtly love could also be used to express feelings of love for the Virgin Mary.[19]

The example of the Arras confraternity spread quickly to other towns. In nearby Valenciennes, similar poetry contests were organised by two confraternities, both called Notre-Dame du Puy. One of them was founded in 1229 and the renewed founding charter with the rules of the confraternity from 1426 shows that this confraternity had a limit of sixty *confrères*; in addition to these sixty members, however, devout women could also enter the confraternity.[20] A collection of eight *serventois couronnes a Valenchienes* survives in a manuscript from the second half of the fourteenth century.[21]

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15 Levente Seláf, *Chanter plus haut. La chanson religieuse vernaculaire au Moyen Âge* (*essai de contextualisation*) (Paris, 2008), 418–428; Gérard Gros, *Le poème du Puy Marial: étude sur le serventois et le chant royal du XIVe siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris, 1996).

16 Rosanna Brusegan, "Culte de la Vierge et origine des puys et confréries en France au Moyen Âge," *Revue des langues romanes* 91/1 (1991), 31–58.

17 For a critical discussion of this connection, see: Maria Carla Battelli, "Le chansons couronnées nell'antica lirica francese," *Critica del testo* 11/2 (1999), 565–617.

18 I agree with the conclusions of Symes, "The Confraternity of Jongleurs" (see above n. 10), 195–197.

19 Barbara Newman, "The Mirror and the Rose: Marguerite Porete's Encounter with the Dieu d'Amours," in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, Nancy Bradley Warren (New York, 2002), 105–123; Samuel N. Rosenberg, "The Serventois in the Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages: The Ways of Imitation," in *Parisian Confraternity Drama of the Fourteenth Century: The Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, ed. Donald Maddox, Sara Sturm-Maddox (Turnhout, 2008), 87–111.

20 Jean-Charles Herbin, "Activité poétique et ménestrels à Valenciennes aux XIVe et XVe siècles," in *Valenciennes aux XIVe et XVe siècles: Art et histoire*, ed. Ludovic Nys, Alain Salamagne (Valenciennes, 1996), 297–313, there 309–310.

21 Paris, BnF, Ms fr. 24432, fol. 303r–310v. See: Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading*

More Puys organising contests for the best *serventois* are documented in the fourteenth century. Manuscript français 819–820 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France dates from the late fourteenth century and contains the texts of forty religious theatre plays called *Miracles Notre Dame par personnages*, sermons, and twenty-five *serventois* celebrating the Virgin.[22] These are written witnesses of the annual festivals organised by the Puy of the goldsmiths in Paris, dedicated to their patron Saint-Éloi (Saint Eligius), between 1339 and 1382.

A second confraternity of goldsmiths in Paris that organised religious poetry competitions was the confraternity of Sainte-Anne.[23] Starting in the late fifteenth century, each year on the first day of May, the *Compagnons du May* decorated the confraternity's chapel in Notre-Dame cathedral with a six-sided *tabernacle*: each face featured a painting and an accompanying poem in French, often quoting and paraphrasing the biblical text, called the *petits écritaux*. A longer and more complicated *chant royal* celebrating the Virgin, called the *grand écritel*, was displayed next to these four-line poems.

A similar output of poems with accompanying paintings was created by the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens founded in 1389, according to the *escritel*, which will be discussed in more detail below.[24] In nearby Abbeville, the confraternity of the *Puy de la Conception de la Vierge*, documented from 1498 onwards, also produced *chants royaux* with accompanying paintings celebrating the Virgin.[25]

Puys and confraternities composing religious poetry were also active further south, in Normandy. In Rouen the confraternity of Notre-Dame du Jardin

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the Secular against the Sacred (Notre Dame, 2013), 113–117; Battelli, "Le chansons couronnées" (see above n. 17), 579–582; Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 40–44.

22 Graham A. Runnalls, "The Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages: Erasures in the Ms. and the Dates of the Plays and the Serventois," *Philological Quarterly* 49 (1970), 19–29; Graham A. Runnalls, "Medieval Trade Guilds and the Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages," in *Parisian Confraternity Drama of the Fourteenth Century: The Miracles de Nostre Dame par personnages*, ed. Donald Maddox, Sara Sturm-Maddox (Turnhout, 2008), 29–65; Gérard Gros, "Du registre de Confrérie à l'anthologie mariale (étude sur la conception du manuscrit de Cangé, Paris, Bibl. nat., fr. 819 et 820)," in *Styles et valeurs: pour une histoire de l'art littéraire du moyen âge*, ed. Daniel Poirion, Anne Berthelot (Paris, 1990), 75–100.

23 Patrick Laharie, *Poèmes du May de Notre-Dame de Paris (1482–1707) et Mémorial de la confrérie Sainte-Anne des orfèvres parisiens (1449–1712)* (Paris, 2000); Annick Notter, *Les Mays de Notre-Dame de Paris* (Arras, 1999). Paris, Archives nationales, KK 1014ter, KK 1348, 90 (started in 1482).

24 For reference to the most important studies, see above n. 1.

25 Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 99–102; Breuil, "La confrérie" (see above n. 1), 575–590. See also the online report of a lecture held by François Séguin in 2016: https://www.amis-musee-abbeville.fr/2016/10/07/œuvre-du-mois-septembre-2016-2-puys-d-abbeville/.

organised poetry contests of *palinods* (probaby *chants royaux*) starting in 1484, and a few years later, in 1486, the Puy de la Conception was officially founded.[26] Other towns in Normandy soon followed Rouen's example: in Caen the *Puy de la Conception* organised its first contest in 1527,[27] and in Dieppe two rhetorical confraternities were active, the confraternity of the *Nativité* and of the *Assumption*, both founded in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.[28]

Puys and contests for the best religious poetry were also present further north, including the Middle-Dutch speaking regions of the Low Countries. They emerged relatively early in French/Picard-speaking towns in the area that is now northern France: the *Puy de l'Assomption* of Douai is attested as early as 1330,[29] and in Lille the Confraternity of *Notre-Dame du Puy* was also active starting in the fourteenth century.[30] By the fifteenth century rhetorical confraternities were active in many other towns in the southern Low Countries, such as the *Puy de l'escole de rhétorique* in Tournai/Doornik,[31] and a contest

26 Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 107–217; Denis Hüe, *La poésie palinodique à Rouen (1486–1550)* (Paris, 2002), 219–342; Denis Hüe, ed., *Petite anthologie palinodique, 1486–1550* (Paris, 2002); Denis Hüe, "La 'Fête aus normands' et le Puy de Palinods de Rouen: la fête dans la ville," in *Marie et la "fête aux Normands". Dévotion, images, poésie*, ed. Françoise Thelamon (Mont-Saint-Aignan, 2011), 107–124; Dylan Reid, "Patrons of Poetry: Rouen's Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Arjan van Dixhoorn, Suzy Speakman Sutch (Leiden, 2008), 33–78; Jean-Claude Arnould, Thierry Mantovani, eds., *Première poésie française de la Renaissance. Autour des Puys poétiques normands* (Paris, 2003).

27 Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 146–148; Odile Malas Semboloni, "L'instauration du Puy de Palinods à Caen," *Bulletin de l'Association d'étude sur l'humanisme, la réforme et la renaissance* 48 (1999), 45–57; Eugène de Robillard de Beaurepaire, *Les Puys de Palinod de Rouen et Caen* (Caen, 1907).

28 Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 143–146, G. Lebas, *Les Palinods et les poètes dieppois. Étude sur les confréries religieuses et littéraires des Puys de Dieppe et sur les poètes de la région depuis le Moyen Âge jusqu'à nos jours* (Dieppe, 1904).

29 Gros, *Le poète* (see above, n. 1), 45–46.

30 Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1) 46; L. Lefèbvre, *Le Puy Notre-Dame de Lille, du XIVe au XVIe siècle* (Lille, 1902); M. de la Fons de Mélicocq, "Confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy, à Lille, aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles," *Archives historiques et littéraires du Nord de la France et du midi de la Belgique*, 3e série 4 (1854), 466–468; Robert S. Duplessis, *Lille and the Dutch Revolt: Urban Stability in an Era of Revolution: 1500–1582* (Cambridge, 1991) 162, 168–169, 180.

31 Katell Lavéant, "The Joyful Companies of the French-Speaking Cities and Towns of the Southern Netherlands and Their Dramatic Culture (Fifteenth-Sixteenth Centuries)," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Arjan van Dixhoorn, Suzy Speakman Sutch (Leiden, 2008), 80–118, there 100–103; Baron De Reiffenberg, "La fête de l'arbalète et du prince d'amour à Tournai en 1455," *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire/Handelingen van de Konink-*

in Dunkerque/Duinkerken that was organised in 1426.[32] Many other similar confraternities were founded in this bilingual area where French/Picard and Middle Dutch often co-existed, such as Bailleul/Belle (1482) and Bergues/Sint Winoksberg (1525, 1530 and 1531).[33] Starting in the early fifteenth century and slightly farther north, in predominantly Middle-Dutch speaking Flanders, a great number of *Rederijkerskamers* (chambers of rhetoric) were founded. A few of the most important examples include the *Heilige Geest* in Bruges (founded in 1428–1429); the *Fonteine* in Ghent (1448), also called a "*broederscip vander retoriken*"; and the *Lichtgeladen* (1448) and *Roziers* (1424, 1448) in Ypres/Ieper.[34]

Medieval confraternities creating social ties uniting lay people and clergy were a widespread phenomenon allowing for an intermingling of the fields of religion and the lay world. The broad spectrum of confraternities producing religious poetry in the area between Paris and Bruges (and possibly even further afield) all had their own characteristics, but they also shared some common features. Most importantly for my argument here was their assembling of laypeople of different social backgrounds and various occupations, together with lower and higher clergy. In addition to this, some of the confraternities produced religious poetry in the vernacular, while using metaphorical imagery that was regularly based on everyday life and the *vita activa*.

2 A Hybrid Forum in Amiens

As briefly touched upon above, the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens has left behind several informative sources. This is firstly the *escritel*, started in 1452 and containing the renewed regulations of the confraternity and records of the masters with the prescribed verses for the annual poetry contest,

lijke Commissie voor Geschiedenis 10 (1845), 255–266; F. Henebert, *Ritmes et refrains tournésiens: poésies couronnées par le Puy d'Escole de Rhétorique de Tournay (1477–1491): extraites d'un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque publique de Tournai* (Mons, 1837).

32 Émile Coornaert, *La Flandre française de langue flamande* (Paris, 1970), 132.

33 Ibid., 131–135; Breuil, "La confrérie" (see above n. 1), 600–607; Jelle Koopmans, "Rhétorique de cour et rhétorique de ville," in *Rhetoric—Rhétoriqueurs—Rederijkers*, ed. Jelle Koopmans et al. (Amsterdam, 1995), 67–81; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille. Rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden (1400–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2008), 42–51. The rhetorical confraternities in these towns and the interrelation of French and Middle Dutch religious poetry (*chants royaux* en *refreinen*) are still underresearched. I am currently preparing a proposal for a new research project on this subject in collaboration with Bart Ramakers and Sabrina Corbellini.

34 Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille* (see above n. 33), 42–51.

which started in 1389 and continued until 1685. New regulations were regularly added. While these are at times difficult to interpret correctly, broadly speaking the confraternity elected a new *maître* from among its members each year, who was to serve for a period of one year. This election probably took place a few weeks before the most important feast of the confraternity, Candlemass (2 February), commemorating the Purification of the Virgin. In the morning the *maîtres*, new and old, together with all other lay and clerical members of the confraternity, would attend Mass in the cathedral, followed by a banquet and the performance of a mystery play in the house of the new master or in one of the inns in Amiens. The awarding of a crown to the author of the prize-winning *chant royal* would also take place on the same occasion. The following day the new master was to offer another Mass in his parish church, or in another place to his liking, commemorating deceased members of the confraternity.

The confraternity would convene for other occasions throughout the year as well. For instance, the *maître* was also expected to offer a Mass on the other four major feasts of the Virgin: Annunciation (25 March); Assumption (15 August); the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September); and the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin (8 December). At these occasions, other poetry competitions and theatrical performances took place, sometimes expressing comical or political subjects. The *maîtres* and members of the confraternity were also expected to assist at the marriages and funerals of other members, and to commemorate deceased members in their prayers. Every Thursday, the confraternity also held a Mass celebrating the Virgin in its chapel of the *Pilier rouge*,[35] located in the cathedral in front of the entrance to the canon's choir.

Each new *maître* chose a metaphorical verse referring to the Virgin and, often simultaneously, to his identity. This verse had to be incorporated into the *chant royal* for the annual contest; in addition, a painting visualising the metaphorical imagery of the verse and depicting the *maître*, his family, and other members of the confraternity was to be made. Probably starting in 1492, the panel paintings were displayed in the cathedral, together with a copy of the winning *chant royal*, calligraphed on parchment and mounted on a wooden panel.[36] In 1517, Louise de Savoie, mother of the French king François Ier, vis-

35 The chapel is still present in the cathedral, against the pillar on the south side of the entrance of the choir. The altar, paintings, and statues are unfortunately not the original ones.

36 For an early eighteenth-century description of some of the paintings still *in situ* in the cathedral, see: Louis Douchet, ed., *Manuscrits de Pagès, marchand d'Amiens, écrits à la fin du 17e et au commencement du 18e siècle*, vol. 2 (Amiens, 1857), 134–170. For further details, see: Richard K. Wittman, "Local Memory and National Aesthetics: Jean Pagès's Early-

ited Amiens and greatly admired the paintings and the calligraphed copies of the winning *chants royaux* on display in the cathedral. The royal admiration led the council of aldermen to decide to have a manuscript made with the *chants royaux* crowned the best, together with full-page miniatures reproducing the metaphorical imagery of the painted panels in the cathedral, or a newly made iconography if the painting had been lost. This is now manuscript français 145 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. The display of painted panels and *chants royaux* in the cathedral, together with the royal manuscript, created a strong collective identity of pride and belonging for the confraternity and sustained strong social bonds between the members, who otherwise might have lived in separate worlds. In some sources the members of the Puy are also called *rhétoriciens* or *escolle de retoricque*, suggesting similar aspirations to those of the later chambers of rhetoric in the southern Low Countries.[37]

In spite of the socially inclusive recruitment of the confraternity, the lay inhabitants of Amiens had numerous sharp conflicts with the community of canons and the bishop, for instance over the responsibility for the hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, and over the ownership of the fertile islands in the River Somme, the *hortillonages*, as is testified by the accounts of the meetings of the aldermen and in other legal documentation.[38]

In times of external pressure, however, the bishop and chapter of Amiens usually collaborated closely with the civic political institutions, and they would discuss in general assemblies the actions the town should take. On 14 and 15 July 1417, for instance, the town held general assemblies in the *halle* (the hall of the cloth merchants), during which delegates from the bishop and the chapter participated alongside the lay inhabitants of Amiens in order to discuss letters from the duke of Burgundy and the king of France, pressuring the town to choose sides (the duke) and to remain faithful to the legal sovereign (the king).[39] In cases such as these, the town acted as a unified legal body that represented the civic institutions, the lay inhabitants, the bishop, and the chapter

Eighteenth-Century Description of the 'Incomparable' Cathedral of Amiens," in *Monuments and Memory: Made and Unmade*, ed. Robert S. Nelson, Margaret Olin (Chicago, 2003), 259–279.

37 In the *escritel* from 1452, see: Beauvillé, *Documents inédits* (see above n. 1), 139. See also: Amiens, Archives départementales de la Somme, E 927 (1537); Katell Lavéant, *Un théâtre des frontières: la culture dramatique dans les provinces du Nord aux XVe et XVIe siècles* (Orléans, 2011), 80.

38 Marie-Claude Dinet-Lecomte, Pascal Montaubin, *Les hôpitaux de Picardie, du Moyen âge à la Révolution: répertoire et guide des sources* (Amiens, 2014), 112–113.

39 Amiens, Archives communales, BB2, fol. 108v–109r.

of canons all together. The world of the religious and the world of the laity were not always opposed to each other, and the two groups could share the same interests and the same urban identity.

This sense of shared belonging and shared identity was also a driving force in the confraternity of Notre-Dame du Puy. Unfortunately, no list of its membership has survived, but the annual reports in the *escritel* of the elections of the new master and of the prescribed metaphorical verse of the poetry competition do show that the confraternity was marked by its social inclusiveness.[40] For approximately three quarters of the masters, the *escritel* mentions their social position, and these brief descriptions show that the confraternity included people from a broad spectrum of backgrounds. The function of master of the confraternity was honourable and costly. As a consequence, most of the *maîtres* were from the clergy, from the nobility, or from the group of very wealthy merchants in Amiens. For instance, judging by the period 1390 to 1520, many of the early *maîtres* were lawyers or notaries: Pierre Mourin (1390); Toussaint Lemanier (1391); Jean du Prier (1392); Thibault d'Hornoy (1394); and Pierre Erard (1396). The clergy was another well-represented group, including Jean Raineval, canon in the Cathedral (1407); Jean de Noex, priest (1416); Godefroy de Wailly, chaplain (1444); Jean de le Mote, priest of the parish church Saint-Martin-au-Bourg (1447); Jean Haste, prior of the collegiate church Saint-Martin-aux-Jumeaux (1470); Adrien de Hénencourt, provost and canon of the cathedral (1493); and Nicolas de La Couture, bishop of Amiens (1510). Some *maîtres* were from the lower nobility, such as Firmin Le Normand, *écuyer*, Lord of Hourges and of Longpré-lès-Amiens (1480) and Jean de Saisseval, *écuyer* and Lord of Pissy (1487).

It is remarkable, however, that the membership of the confraternity also included people who were active in commerce and even artisanal work. Firstly, eighteen *maîtres* are referred to as *bourgeois* or *marchand*, usually, but not necessarily, implying that they were wealthy merchants involved in international

40 Reproduced in: Gros, *Le poète* (see above n. 1), 79–97. For the diverse social composition of other confraternities and chambers of rhetoric, see: Paul Trio, "The Crumbling of the Clerical Monopoly on Urban Devotion in Flanders as a Result of the Rise of Lay Confraternities in the Late Middle Ages," in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Black, Pamela Gravestock Aldershot (Aldershot, 2006), 53–63; Anne-Laure Van Bruaene, "In Principio Erat Verbum. Drama, Devotion Reformation and Urban Association in the Low Countries," in *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Christopher Black, Pamela Gravestock (Aldershot, 2006), 64–80, there 65.

trade and finance. A remarkable number of the descriptions, however, reveal that several of the *maîtres* were actually artisans, shopkeepers, and employees:[41]

Jean de Vaulx, *mercier* (haberdasher, 1422);
Jean Mathon, *tanneur* (tanner, 1433);
Hue Sare, *tanneur* (tanner, 1434);
Jean Du Bos, *mercier* (haberdasher, 1438);
Jean Posson, *orfèvre* (goldsmith, 1442);
Pierre Pertrisel, *tavernier* (pub-keeper, 1443);
Mathieu de Corbie, *appariteur* (bailiff, 1450);
Raoul Lemaistre, *mercier* (haberdasher, 1452);
Simon Pertrisel, *marchant et tavernier* (merchant and pub-keeper, 1453)
Mathieu Boulengas, *tavernier* (pub-keeper, 1457);
Martin Davennes, *cordonnier* (shoemaker, 1467);
Jean Le Barbier, *pâtissier* (pastry baker, 1471);
Jean Obry, *sergent à masse* (bailiff, 1477);
Michel Laloyer, *marchand drapier, chaussetier* (merchant draper and hosier, 1515).

The prominent presence of laywomen in the surviving paintings made for the annual poetry contests and on the miniatures in the early sixteenth-century manuscript offered to Louise de Savoie suggests that the spouses and widows of the *maîtres* occupied an important position in the confraternity as well.[42] The inclusion of women is confirmed by a rule noted in the *escritel*, stating that spouses and widows who had donated money to the confraternity should also be remembered in the members' prayers. In later documents, mentions of *maîtresses* of the confraternity occur next to the *maîtres*.[43]

The recruiting of members of the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens was socially highly diversified, thus allowing different social groups to interconnect, to exchange, and to transform. In fact, the Amiens confraternity, as well as other forms of voluntary associations during the late Middle Ages, can be described as a solidarity network, where social hierarchies and differences were abolished, or at least were less visible.[44] Nicholas Terpstra

41 See also: Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: rederijkers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480–1650)* (Amsterdam, 2009), 105.

42 For the paintings, see above n. 1.

43 Breuil, "La confrérie" (see above n. 1), 523–524.

44 Catherine Vincent, "La confrérie comme structure d'intégration: l'exemple de la Nor-

has recently emphasised the importance of "symbolic kinship" and fraternity.[45] Confraternities were indeed essential spaces of alliance between clergy and laity. Sociability, in the sense of interactive social activity among individuals and connecting them, was another important aspect of the confraternities.[46] Especially in the confraternities that were promoting rhetorical activities, the social bonding and bridging of social differences created a "dialogical space" where different social groups could exchange ideas and experiences, as well as creating new discourses. Some researchers have emphasised the participation of these groups in the "public sphere" as the term is used by Habermas,[47] but internally the Puys and chambers of rhetoric had more the character of hybrid forums, as discussed in the introduction, where lay and religious people were coming together as individuals in order to interconnect, to exchange ideas, and to transform. This interconnection of the religious field with the fields of local governance, commerce, and artisanal production, also led to a conceptual blurring of the boundaries of these fields, as the metaphors used for the poetry contests show intriguing examples of interplay between the spheres of the sacred and the profane.

3 Metaphorical Images of the Sacred Workshop

The prescribed verses for the poetry contest were based on a specific category of metaphorical comparisons celebrating the qualities of the Virgin, her purity, and her instrumentality in the redemption of mankind. At the same time the verses often contained a disguised reference to the *maître*, his name, or his

mandie," in *Le mouvement confraternel au Moyen Âge, France, Italie, Suisse. Actes de la table ronde de Lausanne du 9 au 11 mai 1985* (Rome, 1987), 111–131, there 122–123; Dylan Reid, "Measuring the Impact of Brotherhood: Robert Putnam's 'Making Democracy Work' and Confraternal Studies," *Confraternitas* 14 (2003), 3–12.

45 Nicholas Terpstra, "Boundaries of Brotherhood: Laity and Clergy in the Social Spaces of Religion," in *Faith's Boundaries: Laity and Clergy in Early Modern Confraternities*, ed. Nicholas Terpstra, Adriano Prosperi (Turnhout, 2012), xi–xxxii, there xii.

46 Alan R.H. Baker, *Fraternity Among the French Peasantry. Sociability and Voluntary Associations in the Loire Valley, 1815–1914* (Cambridge, 1999), 42–48; Maurice Agulhon, *La sociabilité méridionale* (*confréries et associations dans la vie collective en Provence orientale à la fin du 18ème siècle*) (Aix-en-Provence, 1966).

47 Symes, *A Common Stage* (see above n. 10), 127–182; Van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten* (see above n. 41), 209–226; Arjan van Dixhoorn, "Chambers of Rhetoric: Performative Culture and Literary Sociability in the Early Modern Northern Netherlands," in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters. Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, vol. 1, ed. Arjan van Dixhoorn, Suzy Speakman Sutch (Leiden, 2008), 119–158.

occupation. For instance, the *maître* of the year 1456, Jean de Saint-Fuscien, *dit Hanotin*, most likely a layman,[48] had the motto "*Cloistre ordonné au reiglet salutaire*" (Convent living orderly according to a healthy rule), referring to the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Fuscien near Amiens and based on his family name. Pierre Pèredieu, priest and headmaster of the schools in Amiens, had the verse "*Siege au grand mestre administrant science*" (Seat of the great master who administers knowledge).[49]

Going through to the collection of laureated poems in the manuscript given to Louise de Lorraine, it quickly becomes clear that several thematic and semantic fields were privileged for the metaphorical descriptions of the Virgin, at least between 1389 and 1520:[50]

– Elements from the Bible[51] and religious life:
  Royal Virgin, true consolation, heaven's gate, altar, branch of Jesse's tree, City of God, manna, temple of grace, tabernacle, golden chandelier, Book of Wisdom, Noah's ark, Judith, priest's garment, censer, mother church, convent, burning bush, chalice, Paradise, Esther, angel, David, holy chrism, Moses, Mount Lebanon.
– Natural phenomena, animals and plants, often with heavily biblical connotations:
  Fountain, star, cedar tree, rock, lily, wheat sheaf, tree trunk, rose, vine, eagle, elephant, pelican, moon, earth, olive, mountain, unicorn, tree, island, heaven, dawn, Stella Maris, sun, sea, rainbow.
– Objects related to daily life, production work, and commerce:
  Pathway, city gate, tent, bridge, clock, table, room, enclosed garden, field, female treasurer, female miner, humble dwelling, bed, tower, shepherdess, lawyer, ladder, house, medicine, mirror, lamp, pool, seal, ship, harp, castle, well, attic, washtub, head of school, balm, court of law, female purse maker, seat, forge, road, bulwark, female key-bearer, female cloth merchant, scales.

48 No specification of his social position is given in the *escritel*; for ordained religious their status is always given.

49 Albéric de Calonne, *Histoire de la ville d'Amiens*, vol. 1 (Amiens, 1899), 475–481.

50 For a typology of the metaphors used, see: Gerard Gros, "Histoire littéraire et puy politique: la poésie mariale de concours au Moyen Âge," in *L'écrivain et ses institutions*, ed. Roger Marchal (Boulogne, 2006), 39–55, there 53–55.

51 For the use of the Old Testament and biblical typology in the poetry of the Amiens confraternity, see: Marie-Christine Gomez-Geraud, "Espace et symbole: figurations typologiques dans les miniatures du manuscrit amiénois offert à Louise de Savoie," in *Première poésie française de la Renaissance. Autour des Puys poétiques normands*, ed. Jean-Claude Arnould, Thierry Mantovani (Paris, 2003), 465–475.

Several of these metaphorical comparisons of the Virgin were also present in early sixteenth-century Books of Hours printed for use in Amiens. These books often included a full-page woodcut representing the Virgin together with visualisations of metaphors referring to her qualities: sun, moon, star, city gate, lily, tower, mirror, well, enclosed garden, etcetera.[52] These metaphorical images are exactly the same as those in several of the prescribed verses of the annual poetry contest, as presented above.

The confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens was not the only one to use unusual metaphorical comparisons for the representation of the qualities of the Virgin based on objects from daily life and manual work. For example, the mirror theme was also used in Rouen,[53] where even a tavern occurs among the metaphors chosen for the annual poetry contest.[54] Rouen and Caen were important harbour towns and hubs for international, even intercontinental trade. Hence it is not surprising that the poets of the Puy in these towns turned to subjects as ships, navigation instruments, and an island as poetical imagery in order to refer to the Virgin.[55]

The use of everyday objects linked to artisanal production work, skills, and trade for the representation of the Virgin Mother of God can be explained as a specific use of metaphors, allegories or similes, poetically playing out the huge distance between the purity of the Virgin and the dirty manual work in a workshop, or the potential sinfulness of commerce. Another explanation has been suggested by Gérard Gros, who referred to the medieval predilection for spiritual interpretations of the Bible and of the Book of Nature as the source for the use of these metaphors: "The entire creation indicates, in a veiled manner, Mary's motherhood."[56]

François Cornilliat has proposed a completely different approach to the poetical imagery of the *chants royaux* celebrating the Virgin that is much more

52 Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne, *Les stalles de la cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens, Histoire, iconographie* (Paris, 2007), 93–95.

53 Gérard Gros, "D'un Puy marial à l'autre: Amiens et Rouen. Variations sur l'allégorie du miroir," in *Marie et la fête aux Normands: dévotion, images, poésie*, ed. Françoise Thelamon (Mont-Saint-Aignan, 2011), 125–149.

54 Denis Hüe, "Une ville et son Puy: Rouen au début du XVIe siècle," in *Paris et les villes normandes*, ed. Huguette Legros, François Neveux (Caen, 2000), 175–195.

55 Gros, *Le poème* (see above n. 15), 298–359; Dorota Szeliga, "L'expérience de navigateur, source d'inspiration poétique à travers quelques chants royaux présentés par Jean Parmentier aux Puys de Rouen et de Dieppe," in *Première poésie française de la Renaissance. Autour des Puys poétiques normands*, ed. Jean-Claude Arnould, Thierry Mantovani (Paris, 2003), 265–279; Denis Hüe, "De Dieppe à Rouen, îles, mers et navigation," in *Mondes marins du Moyen Âge*, ed. Chantal Connochie-Bourgne (Aix-en-Provence, 2006), 199–218.

56 Gros, "Du registre de Confrérie" (see above n. 22), 90–92.

refined and productive. Cornilliat argues that the Virgin, being created by God as a material and yet perfect body, was perceived as infusing the source field of the metaphorical imagery with divine grace:

> The Virgin is the work of God, a woman of flesh and blood, but without a "fracture": she is at the same time human and entirely divine, born in this world without sin, transported into heaven as a material body, the body of the mother of God. Now, the chant royal does not *directly* evoke this divine product of the Immaculate Conception, it "celebrates" it by the intermediary of *another* symbol, usually borrowed from the field of the "mechanical" arts, medicine, architecture, and also including agriculture, tapestry weaving, and navigation. [...] Being a complete body, work of God, the Virgin seems to spread her grace to the *metaphors* intended to represent *her*, and to the *arts* from which the metaphors have been borrowed.[57]

According to Cornilliat the imagery of the *chant royal* is a "subtle treason of symbolic thought." It is not a metaphorical representation of the Virgin by means of created objects, rather the Virgin's material body, being both human and perfect, can have analogies with earthly, imperfect objects and activities:

> The chant royal is the allegory, not of an Idea, but of a Body. The concrete is a sign there, not of an abstract idea, but of another concrete thing.[58]

Ideas like these are also operating in the *chants royaux* made by the confraternity of the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens. For instance, in the year 1508 Nicolas Boulengier, a layman, was its *maître*. In the *écritel* he is described as a merchant

57 François Cornilliat, *"Or ne mens": couleurs de l'éloge et du blâme chez les "grands rhétoriqueurs"* (Paris, 1994), 538: *"La Vierge est l'oeuvre de Dieu, femme de chair, mais sans "fracture": à la fois humaine et toute divine, mise sur terre sans péché, portée au ciel en tant que corps, le corps de la mère de Dieu. Or, le chant royal n'évoque pas directement cette divine fabrication qu'est l'Immaculée Conception; il la "chante" par l'intermédiaire d'un autre symbole, emprunté généralement au domaine des arts "mechanicques", de la médecine, à l'architecture, en passant par l'agriculture, la tapisserie et la navigation.* [...] *En tant que corps intact, oeuvre de Dieu, la Vierge semble étendre sa grâce aux métaphores chargées de la représenter, et aux arts auxquels sont empruntées ces métaphores.*" For the idea of "reversed analogy" see also: Michael Randall, *Building Resemblance: Analogical Imagery in the Early French Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1996), 40–57.

58 Cornilliat, "*Or ne mens*" (see above n. 57) 540: *"Le chant royal est l'allégorie, non pas d'une Idée, mais d'un Corps. Le concret y est signe, non de l'abstrait, masi d'un autre concret* [...]."

FIGURE 1
Miniature accompanying the poem *Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre* (Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece)
PARIS, BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DE FRANCE, MS FRANÇAIS 145, F. 39V

and the verse that he used as his motto was: "*Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre*" (Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece; figure 1). The use of a forge as the source for the imagery of the poem and as his identifying motto, indicates that Nicolas was somehow linked to such a workshop. It is logical to surmise that he was in some way connected to the large group of silversmiths working and living in Amiens, for whom the sale of small silver heads of Saint John the Baptist—the most important relic of the cathedral—was an important source of income.

The prize-winning *chant royal* using his motto exploits the objects present in a smith's workshop for a theological argument.[59] Throughout the poem the metaphorical source and target fields are continuously shifting in both directions. At first the poem does not treat the forge as an image symbolising the Virgin, but she becomes a forge herself: "*Pour forge eslut l'humble vierge Marie*"

59 Paris, BnF, MS français 145, f. 40r. The text is reproduced below.

(The great smith of infinite glory […] elected the humble Virgin Mary as forge). In the second stanza the "hammers and forging instruments" *designate* in a more usual metaphorical way gifts from the Holy Spirit. In the third stanza, however, abstract notions take the form of forging instruments: virginity *is* the anvil; stability *stands for* its wooden support; firm adhesion to God for the tongs; and joyful obedience for the broom. In the following stanza, the poem turns to a play alternating the materiality of both the Virgin and that of a forge with abstract ideas: The Virgin Mary was "shaped as a material body in stunning perfection," thus being an instrument of salvation and producing a "sovereign masterpiece," the Son of God. The final stanza underscores that God knew how to find the harmony and the supreme excellence of the Virgin-forge. Here the *chant royal* expresses the analogy in materiality as identified by Cornilliat: The Virgin-forge *is* and the earthly forge *is* in a similar manner.

Reading this *chant royal* most likely changed the daily experiences of all the confraternity members and of other readers as well. Actions and experiences such as producing objects in a forge, using tools, hammering, selling metal objects, handling metal chandeliers, or precious silver and gold work—for instance the clasps of a book, buckles on a belt, or a silver head of Saint John the Baptist—could turn into tangible reminders of the perfect Virgin-forge. A terrestrial forge, its tools, its activities, and its products are far from being as perfect as the Virgin-forge, but both forges are analogous and, as a consequence, the divine perfection of the Virgin-forge can be experienced in any terrestrial forge and in its products, in early sixteenth-century Amiens or elsewhere.

Another layer of meaning operating in this *chant royal* is the aspect of creating and producing: God has created the Virgin, who in turn gave birth to the son of God. The human production work of alloying metal, hammering and creating objects is an analogous act of creation, infused with divine grace, and so is the creation of poetry. Finally, the *chants royaux* produced by the members of the confraternity were instrumental in disseminating rhetorical skills and theological knowledge. The level of theological knowledge expressed in the *chant royal* discussed here is impressive: the importance of the Immaculate Conception for the salvation of humankind, the contributions to the theological debate about this subject by Thomas Aquinas, and knowledge of figures from the Old and New Testaments such as Jubal, Tubal, and Simeon.

A similar metaphor, now based on the workshop of a cloth merchant was used in 1515 for the *maître* Michel Laloyer, a cloth merchant and hosier. His motto was *Aux desvestus gracieuse drapiere*: female cloth merchant full of grace for those who are undressed.[60] The winning *chant royal* explores the poetical

60 Ibid., f. 43v–44r.

possibilities of analogical imagery by representing the Virgin as a *drapière*, a female cloth merchant, who distributes different kinds of beneficial graces. The chant royal begins with evoking naked mankind who has lost their garment of innocence (*l'habit de innocence*) with which God had clothed them initially. In order to cover mankind's sinful nakedness God has elected the Virgin as *drapière d'excellence*, as most excellent female cloth merchant, who became literally a garment herself by enveloping Christ with her body during the Incarnation. Furthermore, the Virgin distributes to mankind cloth of all kinds of colours. These represent her virtues, which mankind should adopt as well. For instance, scarlet stands for charity, black for humility and chastity, and so forth. Finally, the Virgin made for mankind a garment out of four pieces of cloth, which stand for the four cardinal virtues and for Christ's Passion on the cross. As in the previous example of the Virgin-forge, in this *chant royal* the analogies between Virgin's perfection and the textile industry are being played out. The Virgin is represented as distributing graces and imbuing the textile industry with her perfect qualities. As a consequence, encountering day-to-day objects as cloth and clothing in different textures and colours, as well as everyday work in the textile industry can activate allusions to the virtues and perfection of the Virgin, and thus endow the field of the laity with strong religious connotations.

In several ways the imagery and metaphorical strategies of *chants royaux* as these examples must have strongly contributed to a redrawing of the boundaries of the religious field, extending the sphere of the sacred to imbue the daily life of the laity: artisanal production work, its instruments, and the commercialisation of its products were pervaded with religious connotations of the Immaculate perfection of the Virgin and of her instrumentality in the salvation of humankind. The exchange of concepts also went the other way: For the laity, the *chant royal* implied the possibility of a sanctification of their daily experiences, while it offered the clergy a vocabulary for devotion and theology that was based on the semantic fields of commerce and of the artisanal workshop. In this way the poetry invited laity and clergy to experience religiosity and the divine outside the traditional borders of the religious field.

4 Conclusion

From the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries onwards, people living in the towns in the northern half of France and in the southern Low Countries founded and managed a specific type of confraternity that had the creation of religious poetry as one of its main activities. As in other confraternities, social inclusiveness and sociability were important features: members from a wide

range of social backgrounds were connected by strong social ties, from wealthy merchants to artisans, and also including professed religious, including simple priests, canons regular, and even a bishop. Using the terminology of Michel Callon, these were hybrid forums connecting people and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences. This alliance between laypeople and ordained religious contributed to a dynamization and redrawing of the boundaries of the religious field, which were conceptually stretched to overlap in part lay everyday life and the social field of production and commerce.

Because of the specific orientation of confraternities such as the Puy Notre-Dame in Amiens, they were also creating innovative rhetorical spaces for the laity and ordained religious, mixing notions from daily life in the *vita activa* with those from religion and theology. This enabled a transformation of the religious field taking the form of an exchange of language, knowledge, daily experiences, and identities. This process was also expressed in the metaphorical imagery chosen for the annual competition of *chants royaux*, where in addition to biblical and religious imagery, the semantic field of commerce and artisanal production work was also used for poetry celebrating the purity of the Virgin Mary. In these poems, metaphorical comparisons were used in a specific way: it was a quest for analogies between the purity of the created body of the Virgin and similar material entities in the world of the laity. The poetical activities of the confraternity Notre-Dame du Puy in Amiens introduced imagery from daily life and the *vita activa* into the conceptual language of the religious field, while at the same time exploring the analogies between the purity of the material Virgin and daily life, production work, and commerce, thus endowing these with divine grace. As a consequence, these *chants royaux* had a transformative effect on the identities and religious experiences of both laity and clergy.

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Paris, BnF, MS français 145, f. 40r

Nicolas Boulengier, merchant, maître in 1508

Le grant forgeur de la gloire infinie	The great smith of infinite glory, wishing to
Voeullant en terre ung chief doeuvre eriger	erect on earth a masterpiece, elected the
Pour forge eslut l'humble vierge Marie	humble Virgin Mary as forge, where, with-
Ou sans son corps enfraindre ne affliger	out hurting or distressing her body, with
Par les marteaux tant de l'omnipotence	the hammers of omnipotence, wisdom, and
Que sapience et divine clemence	divine leniency, he wished to form humanity
A son filz wult forger humanite	to the likeness of his Son, by uniting human-
En se unyssant a la divinite	ity to divinity, like this place that above all
Comme ce lieu qui par dessus toute oeuvre	work is adorning Mary with exceptionality:
Rendant Marie en singularite	
Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre	Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece.
Ceste forge est ordonnee et furnie	This forge is equipped with hammers and
Tant de marteaulx que instruments a forger	forging instruments, designating gifts that
Dons designans que en la Vierge anoblie	the Holy Spirit wished to place in the enno-
Le Sainct Esperit volut mettre et loger	bled Virgin. These virtues are good intelli-
Ces vertus sont en bonne intelligence	gence, faith, temperance, hope, prudence,
Foy temperance esperance et prudence	strength, and justice together in mutual love.
Force justice ensamble en charite	One of the bellows infuses purity, the other is
L'ung des soufflets infuse purite	the wish that works in order to conceive, by
L'autre est desir que pour concepvoir se oeuvre	letting the Virgin experience God's bliss:
Prouvant la vierge a sa felicite	
Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre	Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece
La fournaise est de ardeur divin munie	The furnace is endowed with godly fire; its
Le ventre ou Dieu vault l'estoffe plongier	interior where God wants to alloy the mate-
Virginite l'englume ou fut unye	rial. Virginity is the anvil where it was united.
Stabilite par le blocq *puys iuger*[61]	Stability stands for the wooden support; firm
Par la tenaille a Dieu ferme adherence	adhesion to God for the tongs; and joyful
Et l'escouuette hylaire obedience	obedience for the broom. The width or spa-
La latitude ou spaciosite	ciousness in the Virgin means fertility, as

61 A pun on the judging of poetry in the Puys. My emphasis.

En la Vierge signe fecundite
En tant que l'oeuvre ypostatique coeuvre
La demonstrant a nostre utilite
Forge ordonne au souverain chief doeuvre

much as the hypostatic work covers, thus, for our benefit, representing her as:

Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece

Souverain chief d'oeuvre en ceste partye
Est Dieu le fils lequel tant pour purgier
Le virginite de l'humaine lignie
Que en la voye de salut diriger
Organise fut corps par l'influence
Du sainct esperit en mirable excellence
Du trespur sang a la realite
De la vierge manente integrite
Comme en ce pas Saint Thomas[62] se descoeuvre
Tenant Marie en ceste qualite
Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre

The sovereign masterpiece in this place is God's son, who, in order to purify the virginity of the human family, as much as to lead them into the way of salvation, was shaped as a material body by the influence of the Holy Spirit in stunning perfection; from very pure blood to the reality of the integrity existing in the Virgin, as was revealed to Saint Thomas in that biblical passage, keeping Mary in this quality:
Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece

Et comme au son de la martellerie
De Tubal[63] sceut pour humains soulagier
Jubal trouvee accord et armonye
Ainsi sceut Dieu trop mieulx et de legier
De ceste forge en la circonference
Accord trouver et imminense precellence
La douche Vierge en vraie humilite
L'ypostatique accordante unite
Affin que joye au gendre humain recoeuvre
Dont je concludz pour sa maternite
Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre

And just as Jubal, who, in order to help humanity, found chords and harmony to the sound of hammering made by the smith Tubal, in the same manner God knew much better and easier to find the chords and the supreme excellence of this forge: the soft Virgin in true humility, she who gives unity to the hypostasis, in order to bring joy to mankind, by which I conclude about her motherhood:
Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece

62 "Saint Thomas" is interpreted here as Thomas Aquinas, who was critical of the idea of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin but argued that she was cleansed of original sin before her birth. Marielle Lamy, "Le culte marial entre dévotion et doctrine: de la 'Fête aux Normands' à l'Immaculée Conception," in *Marie et la 'Fête aux Normands': Dévotion, images, poésie*, ed. Françoise Thelamon (Mont-Saint-Aignan, 2011), 39–55.

63 See: Genesis 4,22.

Maistre du puy Symeon incyte	Maître of the Puy, Simeon was incited to give
Fut de graces rendre a la trinite	honour to the Trinity when he discovered in
Lors que en ses bras apperceut son maneuvre	his arms the result of its work,
Et a Marie ainsy que ay recite	and also to Mary, just as I have repeated:
Forge ordonnee au souverain chief doeuvre	Forge dedicated to the highest masterpiece